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| Zeichen/Ref./Réf. N.80493 JGL | Anmeldung Nr./Application No./Demande n°/Patent Nr./Patent No./Brevet n°. 00307779.9-2213- |
| Anmelder/Applicant/Demandeur/Patentinhaber/Proprietor/Titulaire Ricoh Company | |

COMMUNICATION

The European Patent Office herewith transmits as an enclosure the European search report for the above-mentioned European patent application.

If applicable, copies of the documents cited in the European search report are attached.

☒ Additional set(s) of copies of the documents cited in the European search report is (are) enclosed as well.

The following specifications given by the applicant have been approved by the Search Division:

☐ abstract

☐ title

☒ The abstract was modified by the Search Division and the definitive text is attached to this communication.

The following figure will be published together with the abstract:

2

REFUND OF THE SEARCH FEE

If applicable under Article 10 Rules relating to fees, a separate communication from the Receiving Section on the refund of the search fee will be sent later.





| DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT | | | |
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| X | ✓ PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 1996, no. 03, 29 March 1996 (1996-03-29) & JP 07 311524 A (RICOH CO LTD), 28 November 1995 (1995-11-28) * abstract; figures 1-16 * --- | 1,10,15, 16,20 | |
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| The present search report has been drawn up for all claims | | | |
| Place of search MUNICH | | Date of completion of the search 19 December 2000 | Examiner Kys, W |
| CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X: particularly relevant if taken alone Y: particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D: document cited in the application L: document cited for other reasons &: member of the same patent family, corresponding document | | | |

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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EP 00 30 7779

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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19-12-2000

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ABSTRACT / ZUSAMMENFASSUNG / ABREGE

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In an image forming device management system and method of the present invention, a data communication device (7) transmits, on an early message date that is earlier than a normal message date for a corresponding one of a plurality of image forming devices (1-5), a usage data of the corresponding one of the image forming devices (1-5) to a center management device (6) via a telephone network (8) by using a call sent by the data communication device. The center management device (6) receives, on the early message date for the corresponding one of the image forming devices (1-5), the usage data of the corresponding one of the forming devices (1-5) that is transmitted by the data communication device (7), by using the call that is sent by the data communication device (6). The center management device (8) issues a billing of a usage charge of the corresponding one of the image forming devices (1-5) based on the usage data received by the center management device (6).